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Message Text

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43
ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 CU-04 NIC-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /127 W
---------- 119542
R 101625Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5462

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, TS
SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURN TO CLASSES:
REPORT INDICATES STUDENTS EXPECT GENERAL
STUDENT AMNESTY JUNE 1.

REF: TUNIS 2697, TUNIS 2433, TUNIS 2292

1. SUMMARY: UNIVERSITY STUDENT RETURNED TO CLASSES EN MASSE MAY 9. REASON FOR SUDDEN RETURN NOT CLEAR BUT ONE REPORT INDICATES STUDENTS EXPECT GENERAL STUDENT AMENSTY ON JUNE 1. APPEARL OF STUDENT TRAIL HEARD MAY 8 ENDED WITH MIXED RESUTLS BUT MOST STUDENTS GOT LIGHTER SENTENCES. GOT HAS GIVEN NO PUBLIC INDICATIN THERE WILL BE STUDENT AMNESTY ON JUNE 1, I.E. AFTER CLASSES AND PRIOR TO EXAMS. HOWEVER, SUCH A MEASURE WOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S CARROT AND STICK APPROACH TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURNED TO CLASSES EN MASSE MAY 9 AND UNIVERSITY WAS OPERATING NORAMALLY FOR FIRST TIME SINCE APRIL 16, EVEN THOUGH RIOT POLICE (BOP) REMAIN POSTED AT KEY POINTS AT UNIVERSITY.

3. ON MAY 8 CORRECTIONAL COURT HEARD APPEAL OF SOME
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37 STUDENTS WHO HAD BEEN TRIED ON APRIL 17 AND 20 AND

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WHOSE CONVICTIONS WERE CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN CALL FOR
INITIAL ONE DAY STRIKE AND IN PROLONGING IN INDEFINITELY. WHILE
BASIC ISSUE OF STRIKE HAS BEEN STUDENT REPRESENTATION
QUESTION, I.E. STUDENT UNION (UGET) CONGRESS, POLICE
REPRESSION HAS BECOME CATALYST FOR MAINTAINING STUDENT
SOLIDARITY AS EXAM PERIOD DRAWS NEAR. LAWYER WHO LED
APPEAL OF 24 TRIED ON APRIL 20 (REFTEL) REPORTS THREE
WERE RELEASED, THREE (GIRLS) WHO HAD ORIGINALLY
RECEIVED SIX MONTHS SENTENCES HAD THESE REDUCED TO
THREE MONTHS, TEN OTHERS HAD SENTENCES REDUCED FROM
ONE YEAR TO SIX MONTHS AND SENTENCES OF SIX SERE INCREASED
FROM ONE YEAR TO 18 MONTHS. OUTCOME OF OTHER FIVE NOT
KNOWN. IN ADDITION COURT UPHELD VERDICT
AND SENTENCES OF THOSE CONVICTED ON APRIL 17. FOUR OF
THESE 13 REMAIN IN ABSENTIA.

4. ACCORDING TO LAWYER WHO CLOSE TO STUDENTS, LATTER
DECIDED MAY 8 TO RETURN TO CLASSES ON BASIS OF UNDER-
STANDING THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA ON JUNE 1 (VICTORY
DAY) WILL SIGN GENERAL AMNESTY FOR ALL STUDENTS NOW
UNDER ARREST OR CONVICTION FOR STRIKES QHIS YEAR.
HOW STUDENTS ARRIVED AT THIS UNDERSTANDING NOT KNOWN
TO US. LAWYER WOULD NOT ELEBORATE PERHAPS BECAUSE
HE FEELS CASE OF HIS CLIENTS COULD BE PREJUDICED BY
PUBLICITY THIS INFO.

5. GOT SECURITY OFFICIALS MAY 9 TOLD EMBOFF THAT
STUDENTS HAD RETURNED TO CLASSES AND THAT THIS PROVED
GOT STARTEGY (REFTEL) HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL. THEY
MADE NO MENTION OF ANY UNDERSTANDING ON AMNESTY.

6. BOURGUIBA HAD LONG MEETING APRIL 30 WITH MIN JUSTICE
PRIOR TO HIS MEETING WITH COUNCIL OF MAGISTRATES. UNLIKE
PAST, HIS SPEECH TO COUNCIL NOT PUBLICIZED AND THERE
HAS BEEN LITTLE INFO ON WHAT WAS DISCUSSED IN EITHER
MEETING. HOWEVER, LAWYERS HAVE REPORED THAT IT WAS
BOURGUIBA WHO INSISTED THAT APPEALS OF STUDENTS
BE HEARD QUICKLY EVEN THOUGH MAGISTRATES HAD ADVISED THAT
THEY BE DELAYED.

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7. COMMENT: CLASSES WERE SCHEDULED END MAY 1 IN
MOST FACULTIES SO LITTLE WILL BE GAINED BY CURRENT FULL
ATTENDANCE. MOST EXAMS WILL BE HELD AFTER JUNE 1.
IF STUDENTS RERALLY THINK THERE IS CHANCE FOR AMNESTY
THEY MAY REMAIN IN CLASSES AS LONG AS THESE ARE HELD.
HOWEVER, IF THEY DISAPPOINTED OVER JUNE 1 ANNOUNCEMENTS,
THEY COULD BOYCOTT EXAMS. CURRENT ESTIMATE IS MANY
STUDENTS WILL FAIL EXAMS IN ANY CASE DUE TO LOSS OF

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IMPORTANT CLASS WORK. AMNESTY OFFER WOULD BE IN ACCORD
WITH BOURGUIBA'S "CARROT AND STICK" PHILOSOPHY BUT
WILL STILL NOT SURE ANY OFFER WAS MADE OR IMPLIED. REAL
QUESTION IS WHAT STUDENTS THINK AND WE SEEKING TO LEARN
MORE ON THIS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMNESTY, STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, UNIVERSITIES, ARRESTS, TRIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TUNIS02860
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740116-0168
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740555/aaaabxgh.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: TUNIS 2697, TUNIS 2433, TUNIS 2292
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 AUG 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

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30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RETURN TO CLASSES: REPORT INDICATES STUDENTS EXPECT GENERAL
TAGS: PINS, TS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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